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HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 29
47TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2005

INTRODUCED BY
Gloria C. Vaughn

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

A JOINT MEMORIAL
TO DEVELOP WAYS AND MEANS TO IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE EYE
EXAMINATION HEALTH CERTIFICATE FOR CHILDREN ENTERING
KINDERGARTEN OR FIRST GRADE.

WHEREAS, eighty percent of a child's learning occurs
through the visual system; and
WHEREAS, according to the American optometric association,
sixteen percent of all children suffer from inadequate visual
skills and up to ninety-four percent of children with reading
problems have reduced visual skills; and
WHEREAS, up to one in four children have some form of
vision problem that may prevent them from succeeding in school;
and
WHEREAS, these vision problems may interfere with a
child's ability to learn, contribute to disciplinary problems
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1 in school and be mistaken or misdiagnosed as a learning
2 disability; and

3 WHEREAS, although vision is critical to learning, most
4 children are not aware that they have a vision problem; and

5 WHEREAS, most parents think the vision screening tests now
6 required in New Mexico schools are complete eye examinations;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, the current required vision screening tests in
9 New Mexico schools miss a third of major vision problems; and

10 WHEREAS, most school dropouts have never had an eye
11 examination; and

12 WHEREAS, in Kentucky, which requires kindergarten-age
13 children to have a comprehensive eye examination before
14 entering public school, a study found that one in seven
15 children needed vision correction; and

16 WHEREAS, there are approximately one hundred seventy-three
17 thousand students in New Mexico between the ages of five and
18 eighteen and about twenty-seven thousand of them are
19 kindergartners; and

20 WHEREAS, all children on medicaid are entitled to an
21 annual eye examination, and many private insurance policies
22 cover full annual eye examinations for children; and

23 WHEREAS, despite availability of coverage for eye
24 examinations, there is limited access to optometrists and
25 ophthalmologists in rural New Mexico;

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1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
2 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of health, in
3 cooperation with the public education department, be requested
4 to develop ways and means to implement a comprehensive eye
5 examination health certificate for all children entering
6 kindergarten or first grade; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, for the purposes of this
8 study, a "comprehensive eye examination" means a complete
9 examination of the eye and human vision system, including an
10 evaluation of visual acuity at various distances, alignment and
11 ocular mobility, binocular fusion abnormalities, actual
12 refractive error, color vision abnormalities, intraocular
13 pressure, as medically appropriate, and overall ocular health;
14 and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study examine current
16 requirements for eye examinations in public schools in New
17 Mexico and compare the scope of these examinations to the
18 standard of a comprehensive eye examination as defined in this
19 resolution; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study consider the
21 availability of optometrists and ophthalmologists in New Mexico
22 to conduct comprehensive eye examinations; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study ascertain the
24 potential cost for and benefits of a comprehensive eye
25 examination for children; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings of this study be
2 presented to the interim legislative health and human services
3 committee at its October 2005 meeting; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
5 transmitted to the secretary of health and the secretary of
6 public education.

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